

**Health Equity Task Force established by Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020**  
**Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, February 2, 2021, 3:30 – 5PM**

**Members in Attendance:** Dr. Milagros Abreu, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Michael Curry, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, Rep. Liz Miranda, Dr. Cassandra Pierre, Dr. Frank Robinson, Jeffrey Sanchez, Dr. Assaad Sayah, Hiram Shah, Beverly Stables, Rep. Chynah Tyler, Rep. Donald H. Wong

**Members Excused:** Senator Julian Cyr (represented by Legislative Director and General Counsel, Elizabeth Ganz), Rep. Carlos Gonzalez, Dr. Kiame Mahaniah

Co-Chair Dr. Assaad Sayah opened the meeting and welcomed Health Equity Task Force members and the public then reviewed the open meeting law requirements for remote virtual meetings.

Co-Chair Michael Curry conducted a roll call to confirm attendance and that participants could hear the proceedings. This was followed by an approval of the minutes for the January 19, 2021 Health Equity Task Force meeting. A review of the agenda for the meeting was conducted.

Co-Chair Dr. Assaad Sayah welcomed a presentation and dialogue on Connecticut's Health and Health Equity dashboards led by Victoria Veltri, JD, LL.M., Executive Director, Connecticut Office of Health Strategy. The Task Force intends to learn about the best practices and innovations in Connecticut and how they may be applied in our state.

Director Veltri provided an in-depth overview of Connecticut's leadership in developing the multi-year dashboards in alignment with Healthy People 2020 goals and initially supported through a State Innovation Models Initiative via the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Connecticut is currently pursuing data at a disaggregated level and has proposed legislation to further data collection. Connecticut is using the dashboards to inform priorities with continuing opportunities ahead. Core measures have been incorporated into value-based health care contracts.

**Links to Connecticut Dashboards:**

Link to Open Data portal for COVID-19 in Connecticut

<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-data/wa3g-tfvc/>

Link to Connecticut Healthy People 2020 dashboards

<https://stateofhealth.ct.gov/HCT2020/HCT2020Index>

Task Force Members engaged in a dialogue with Director Veltri about how the measurement of data and dashboards can lead to accountability, data quality, and recommendations for other states to launch this work.

Co-Chair Michael Curry introduced a presentation and dialogue on the innovative work of the Health Opportunity and Equity (HOPE) Initiative: Measures to Advance Health and Opportunity led by Nadia Siddiqui, MPH, Chief Health Equity Officer, and Afrida Faria, MPH, Health Policy Research Analyst, Texas Health Institute.

Ms. Siddiqui and Ms. Faria provided an overview of the framework for the HOPE Initiative. HOPE provides a new opportunity approach and actionable data to help the nation and states move beyond measuring disparities to spurring action toward health equity. The HOPE Initiative provides national and state comparative data on 27 indicators by population group (race and ethnicity, income, and education) – with a focus on those indicators that are modifiable by policy and action. This includes a focus upstream and indicators that encompass broader social determinants of health. It helps identify equity gaps, set equity goals, measure distance to goals, and drive equity action.

While Massachusetts ranks well across HOPE measures in aggregate, this masks the opportunities for improvement. While overall Massachusetts seems to perform better than other states on certain indicators overall, opportunity and health vary profoundly by race and ethnicity when examining the subpopulation data. Racial and ethnic groups facing the greatest systemic barriers to basic life opportunities also face the poorest health outcomes in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, according to the HOPE data. Encouraging the exploration of the data, presenters conveyed that systemic investments to achieve HOPE's equity goals in opportunity and health can help lift the boat for all Massachusetts residents, and especially for people of color who have long endured the effects of systemic racism.

**Links to the HOPE Initiative:**

HOPE Initiative Website: [www.HopeInitiative.org](http://www.HopeInitiative.org)

HOPE Massachusetts Page: <https://www.hopeinitiative.org/state/massachusetts>

New England Journal of Medicine's interactive HOPE platform: [https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2029139?query=featured\\_home](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2029139?query=featured_home)

Task Force Members expressed alignment with the HOPE framework, which is based on an “opportunities” and “not deficits” framing.

Task Force Members engaged in a dialogue with panelists and expressed how the presentations were highly informative and inspiration for the Task Force priority to foster health equity data and dashboards in Massachusetts.

Co-Chair Dr. Assaad Sayah provided a brief overview of the future work of Task Force in developing the Final Report. The timeline will extend into March, reflecting extensive stakeholder input and Task Force Member leadership through subgroups aligned with the legislative charge, with a likely end of March target date for the filing of the Final Report. Task Force Members will review draft sections of the report in 2 upcoming Task Force Meetings on February 16 and 23.

The meeting closed with a reminder of the upcoming February 8th Public Hearing where testimony is encouraged to inform the Final Report of the Task Force on current and long-term recommendations - not only on equity in the COVID-19 response, but on ongoing future opportunities to address the root causes of inequity.